

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-14. Canceled.

15. (Currently amended) An in-line skate comprising:

a plurality of wheels;

a base defining an upper surface, a lower surface, a toe end, a heel end, and a longitudinal axis, generally from the toe end to the heel end;

a frame secured to the lower surface of the base for mounting the plurality of wheels;

a ~~non-rigid~~ pliable upper portion adapted to receive a skater's foot, the ~~non-rigid~~ pliable upper portion being secured to the base;

a substantially rigid internal heel counter disposed in the upper portion and fixedly secured to the base, the internal heel counter projecting upwardly from the heel end of the base;

a substantially rigid ankle support cuff extending upwardly from the upper portion and pivotally secured to the internal heel counter, wherein the ankle support cuff is pivotable substantially independently of the upper portion, and is constrained to pivot about an axis transverse to the longitudinal axis defined by the base; and

an ankle pad lining an interior of the ankle support cuff.

16. (Currently amended) The skate of Claim 15, wherein the ankle support cuff is ~~completely separate from~~ not mechanically attached to the upper portion.

17. (Previously presented) The skate of Claim 15, wherein the ankle pad extends downwardly below the ankle support cuff and within the internal heel counter

18. (Previously presented) The skate of Claim 17, wherein a lower edge of the ankle pad is free and separate from the internal heel counter.

19. (Previously presented) The skate of Claim 15, further comprising at least a partial outer ankle shell covering an exterior of the ankle support cuff.

20. (Previously presented) The skate of Claim 19, wherein the outer ankle shell is non-rigid.

21. (Previously presented) The skate of Claim 20, wherein at least a portion of the ankle support cuff is exposed between the outer ankle shell and the upper portion.

22. (Previously presented) The skate of Claim 15, wherein a gap is defined between a lower rear edge of the ankle support cuff and an upper rear edge of the upper portion.

23. (Previously presented) The skate of Claim 15, wherein the base is substantially rigid.

24. (Previously presented) The skate of Claim 15, wherein the upper portion comprises a breathable fabric.

25. (Currently amended) A skate comprising:

- a plurality of wheels;
- a base defining an upper surface, a lower surface, a toe end, a heel end, and a longitudinal axis;
- a frame secured to the base for rotatably mounting the plurality of wheels;
- a ~~non-rigid~~ pliable upper portion adapted to receive a skater's foot and secured to the base, the ~~non-rigid~~ pliable upper portion extending upwardly from the base and adapted to terminate below the ankle of the received skater's foot;
- a substantially rigid internal heel counter mounted within and covered by the ~~non-rigid~~ pliable upper portion; and
- an ankle support assembly pivotably connected to the substantially rigid internal heel counter at only lateral and medial sides thereof, the ankle support assembly including a substantially rigid external ankle cuff and a flexible ankle pad;

wherein the substantially rigid external ankle cuff includes oppositely disposed tab portions that extend downwardly to pivotally engage the substantially rigid internal heel counter such that the ankle support assembly is constrained to pivot about an axis transverse to the longitudinal axis defined by the base.

26. (Currently amended) ~~An improved skate of the type including~~ A skate having a plurality of wheels, a base defining an upper surface, a lower surface and a longitudinal axis, a frame secured to the base for mounting the plurality of wheels, a ~~non-rigid~~ pliable upper portion adapted to receive a skater's foot and secured to the base, the ~~non-rigid~~ pliable upper portion extending upwardly from the base and adapted to terminate below the ankle of the received skater's foot, the improvement comprising:

a substantially rigid internal heel counter mounted within and at least partially covered by the ~~non-rigid~~ pliable upper portion, and an external substantially rigid ankle cuff pivotally connected to the internal heel counter, and pivotable forwardly relative to the internal heel counter free of any substantial resistance from the ~~non-rigid~~ pliable upper portion wherein the external ankle cuff pivots only about an axis that is transverse to the longitudinal axis defined by the base.

27. (Previously presented) The skate of Claim 26, further including an ankle pad lining an interior surface of the external ankle cuff and extending downwardly into and received within an interior of the heel counter.